

# **International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (Basic Instrument for the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT))**

## **Basic Instrument**

International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (TIAS 6767), 20 U.S.T. 2887, 1969, which was signed on May 14, 1966.

## **Implementing Legislation**

Atlantic Tunas Convention Act ([ATCA](#)) of 1975 (16 U.S.C. 971 *et. seq.*)

## **Members**

There are currently 50 Contracting Parties: Albania, Algeria, Angola, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Canada, Cape Verde, China (People's Republic), Côte d'Ivoire, Curaçao, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, European Union (EU), France (in respect of St. Pierre et Miquelon), Gabon, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea (Republic of), Honduras, Iceland, Japan, Korea (Republic of), Liberia, Libya, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Philippines, Russian Federation, Sao Tome and Principe, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa (Republic of), Syria, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom (in respect of its overseas territories), United States, Uruguay, Vanuatu, and Venezuela.

## **Commission Headquarters**

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## **Budget**

The Commission's Standing Committee on Finance and Administration (STACFAD) approves a biennial budget during each regular meeting of the Commission. ICCAT's financial situation has been strong in recent years. At its 2013 Annual Meeting, the Commission adopted a budget of 3,122,635 Euros for 2014 and 3,199,888 Euros for 2015. The U.S. contribution is 161,614 Euros for 2014 and 165,565 Euros for 2015. The United States and other ICCAT members have also periodically provided extra-budgetary funds to ICCAT to support various initiatives, including ICCAT's data fund for the improvement of ICCAT statistics. A [meeting participation fund](#) makes financial support available to ensure the attendance of developing State members to various scientific and non-scientific ICCAT meetings. Money to support this fund have been provided from voluntary contributions and from ICCAT's Working Capital Fund. In 2014, ICCAT created a new fund to assist developing states in implementing port inspection responsibilities [[Rec. 14-08](#)].

## **U.S. Representation**

A. Appointment Process:

ATCA provides that not more than three Commissioners shall represent the United States in ICCAT. Commissioners are appointed by the President and serve 3-year terms. Of the three U.S. Commissioners, one can be a salaried employee of any state or political subdivision thereof, or of the Federal Government. The Government Commissioner is not limited in the number of terms that he or she can serve. Of the two Commissioners who are not government employees, one must have knowledge and experience regarding commercial fishing in the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico or Caribbean Sea and the other must have similar knowledge and experience regarding recreational fishing. Non-Government Commissioners are not eligible to serve more than two consecutive 3-year terms.

B. U.S. Commissioners:

Government

Mr. Russell F. Smith  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for  
International Fisheries, NOAA  
HCHB, 14<sup>th</sup> & Constitution Ave NW  
Washington, D.C. 20230-0001

Recreational

Ms. Ellen Peel

Commercial

Mr. Eugenio Piñeiro-Soler

C. Advisory Structure:

The U.S. Commissioners are required, under ATCA, to constitute an Advisory Committee to the U.S. National Section to ICCAT. This body shall, to the maximum extent practicable, consist of an equitable balance among the various groups concerned with the fisheries covered by the Convention and is exempt from the Federal Advisory Committee Act. The Committee consists of (1) “not less than five nor more than twenty individuals appointed by the United States Commissioners who shall select such individuals from the various groups concerned with the fisheries covered by the Convention” and (2) the Chairs (or their designees) of the New England, Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Councils (FMCs). Public Committee members serve 2-year terms and are eligible for reappointment. The Committee generally consists of the maximum 20 public members and the five FMC representatives.

Upon approval of the Committee by the Department of State, the directors (or their designees) of the fisheries agencies of each of the states, the residents of which maintain a highly migratory species fishery in the regulatory area of the Convention, may be invited to serve as *ex officio* members of the Committee. The Advisory Committee is invited to attend all non-executive meetings of the U.S. Commissioners and, at such meetings, shall have the opportunity to examine and to be heard on all proposed programs of investigation, reports, recommendations, and regulations of the Commission.

ATCA also provides that the Commissioners may establish species working groups for the purpose of providing advice and recommendations to the Commissioners and to the Advisory Committee on matters relating to the conservation and management of any highly migratory species covered by the Convention. Any species working group shall consist of no more than seven members of the Advisory Committee and no more than four scientific or technical personnel. The Commissioners have established the following five working groups: billfish, swordfish, sharks, bluefin tuna, and BAYS (bigeye, albacore, yellowfin, and skipjack) tunas.

The Chairman of the Advisory Committee is Dr. John Graves, The College of William and Mary, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, School of Marine Science, Gloucester Point, VA 23062. The Committee’s Executive Secretary is Rachel O’Malley, Office of International Affairs and Seafood Inspection, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. The Committee meets at least twice a year, usually in Silver Spring, Maryland. The Committee’s Statement of Operating Practices and Procedures is available from its Executive Secretary.

## **Description**

### **A. Mission/Purpose:**

ICCAT was established to provide an effective program of international cooperation in research and conservation in recognition of the unique problems related to the highly migratory nature of tunas and tuna-like species. The Convention area is defined as all waters of the Atlantic Ocean, including the adjacent seas. The Commission is responsible for providing internationally coordinated research on the condition of Atlantic tuna and tuna-like species, and their environment, as well as for the development of regulatory recommendations. The objective of such regulatory recommendations is to conserve and manage species of tuna and tuna-like species throughout their range in a manner that maintains their population at levels that will permit the maximum sustainable catch.

### **B. Organizational Structure:**

ICCAT is comprised of (1) a commission, (2) a council, (3) an executive secretary, and (4) subject area panels. The Commission consists of not more than three delegates from each Contracting Party. The Council, if established, is an elected body within the Commission consisting of a chairman, vice-chairman, and representatives of not less than four nor more than eight Contracting Parties and which performs such functions as are assigned to it by the Convention or Commission. Although the Council is supposed to meet at least once between regular meetings (which occur every other year), since 1978, Special Meetings of the Commission have been held in lieu of meetings of the Council.

The Executive Secretary is responsible for coordinating the programs of investigation, preparing budget estimates, disbursing funds and accounting for expenditures; preparing the collection and analysis of data to accomplish the purposes of the Convention; and preparing scientific, administrative, and other reports for approval by the Commission.

Panels are established by the Commission and are responsible for review of the species under their purview; collection of scientific and other information; proposing conservation recommendations for joint actions; and recommending studies by the Contracting Parties. Currently, Panel 1 covers tropical tunas (bigeye, yellowfin, and skipjack). Panel 2 covers North Atlantic temperate tunas (northern bluefin and albacore). Panel 3 covers South Atlantic temperate tunas (southern bluefin and albacore). Lastly, Panel 4 covers other species, including swordfish, billfishes, sharks, and other species.

ICCAT has established five standing committees as follows: (1) the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS), (2) the Standing Committee on Finance and Administration (STACFAD), (3) the Conservation and Management Measures Compliance Committee (COC), (4) the Permanent Working Group for the Improvement of ICCAT Statistics and Conservation Measures (PWG), and (5) the Standing Working Group to Promote Dialogue between Fisheries Scientists and Managers [see [Rec. 13-18](#)].

### **C. Programs:**

The Commission concerns itself with (1) joint planning of research, coordination of research carried on by agencies of the Parties in accordance with its plans, and joint evaluation of the results of such research; (2) the collection and analysis of statistical information relating to the condition of fishery resources in the Convention area; and (3) joint formulation of regulatory recommendations for submission to the Parties.

Recommendations adopted by the Commission are submitted to contracting governments for acceptance. These recommendations become effective for all Parties to the Convention six months after their formal submission to all Parties (unless otherwise stated) provided objections are not made during that period by concerned contracting governments. Each Contracting Party has the responsibility for implementing and enforcing the Commission's recommended conservation and management measures.

*Additional information:*

The proceedings of ICCAT's annual meetings and a complete accounting of all ICCAT conservation and management measures, including those related to compliance issues, can be found on the ICCAT website ([www.ICCAT.int](http://www.iccat.int)). Recommendations (binding) and resolutions (non-binding) are available at: <http://www.iccat.int/en/RecsRegs.asp>.

### **Panel 1 - Bigeye, Yellowfin and Skipjack Tunas**

Bigeye, yellowfin and skipjack are tropical tunas most often found as mixed stocks in their juvenile phase. Mature fish are known to migrate across the Atlantic where they are important components of the fisheries of various countries, including the United States. The high proportion of juvenile bigeye and yellowfin catches by some surface fleets targeting skipjack and the consequent impacts on yields has remained a concern for many years. SCRS has recently initiated a large-scale tagging program for tropical tunas to improve knowledge about the biology, distribution and movement of tropical tuna species.

The latest assessment of bigeye tuna (2010) estimated that relative biomass and the relative fishing mortality rate are very close to the levels associated with maximum sustainable yield (MSY), although there is considerable uncertainty in the assessment of stock status and productivity for bigeye. Yellowfin tuna was assessed in 2011, and the SCRS estimated that the stock was overfished but overfishing was not occurring. Skipjack tuna was assessed in 2014, and SCRS recommended that catch and effort levels in the eastern Atlantic do not exceed the levels of recent years, while catches in the western Atlantic should not exceed MSY.

Management measures have been in place for bigeye tuna since 2004, including a total allowable catch (TAC) and capacity limits. A time/area closure off West Africa, first adopted in 1999, has been modified several times. At the 2011 annual meeting, a three-year TAC for bigeye (2012-15) was set at 85,000 mt per year in line with scientific advice. This recommendation also established management measures for yellowfin tuna, including an annual TAC of 110,000 mt, and expanded monitoring, control and surveillance measures in the tropical tunas fishery, including new logbook requirements for purse seine and bait boats, management plans for fish aggregating devices (FADs), vessel monitoring system requirements, and a regional observer program for vessels fishing in the closed area during the closed period (January and February). The tropical tunas regional observer program required 100% observer coverage for surface fishing vessels during the closure period. However, the regional observer program has not been implemented to date; instead, vessels have used national observers. In 2014, the comprehensive measure for tropical tunas was revised to incorporate skipjack and to abolish the regional observer program in favor of national observers in the time/area closure ([Rec. 14-01](#)). A new Working Group of scientists, managers and stakeholders will meet for the first time in May 2015 to review existing knowledge on FADs and develop comprehensive recommendations for consideration by the Commission.

### **Panel 2 - North Atlantic Bluefin Tuna and Albacore:**

*Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna:* At its 1998 meeting, ICCAT adopted a rebuilding program for Western Atlantic bluefin tuna with the goal of reaching MSY in 20 years. This was the first time that ICCAT articulated a rebuilding goal to guide its management actions and adopted a plan for achieving that goal. The initial annual TAC established under the program was 2,500 mt, inclusive of dead discards. The rebuilding program provided flexibility to alter the TAC, the MSY target, and/or the rebuilding period based upon subsequent scientific advice. The TAC, shared by the United States, Japan, Canada, the United Kingdom (in respect of Bermuda), France (in respect of St. Pierre et Miquelon), and Mexico has been adjusted periodically since 1998 and other elements of the rebuilding program have also been altered, such as the tolerance for recreational catches of bluefin tuna weighing less than 30 kg (the current minimum size in the west).

In 2010, ICCAT adopted a measure that incorporated the three minor harvesters (UK-Bermuda, France-St. Pierre and Miquelon, and Mexico) into the allocation table, added some reporting obligations (in particular a requirement to provide provisional monthly catch reports to the Secretariat), and continued a bilateral quota transfer arrangement from Mexico to Canada. The annual TAC remained at 1,750 mt from 2011-14.

In 2014, results of the stock assessment for western Atlantic bluefin tuna showed an improvement in the status of the stock, with overfishing no longer occurring. [Recommendation 14-05](#) increased the annual TAC to 2,000 mt for 2015 and 2016, a level that is within the range of scientific advice and will allow for continued growth of the

spawning stock biomass. A third meeting of the Working Group of Fishery Managers and Scientists in Support of the Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Stock Assessment will take place in June 2015, and a stock assessment is planned for 2016.

*Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Bluefin Tuna:* The United States has long urged the adoption of strong conservation measures in the east in particular due to the growing evidence of stock mixing. ICCAT began adopting measures to limit harvests of eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna, including TACs and country specific quotas, in the mid to late 1990s due to concerns about the status of the stock. However, for many years, eastern harvesters failed to follow scientific advice on TAC levels and other actions and largely failed to effectively implement ICCAT recommendations. This situation began to improve in the late 2000s.

In 2008, ICCAT adopted a substantially strengthened recommendation for the eastern fishery that included a reduction in TAC, extension of the Mediterranean time and area closure, freezing and reductions of fleet capacity, and freezing of farming capacity. New monitoring and control measures were also introduced, including a regional observer program for large-scale purse seine vessels, a ban on at-sea transshipment, a revised boarding and inspection regime, and enhanced control and reporting measures for caging transfer activities. Significantly, the measure also required all parties to establish individual vessel quotas for their fleets. In 2009, ICCAT adopted a further reduction in the TAC to 13,500 mt, which was below the 15,000 mt TAC recommended by the SCRS and agreed to establish new management measures at the 2010 annual meeting aimed at rebuilding the stock by the end of 2022 with at least a 60% probability. The measure also extended the length of the purse seine time and area closure in the Mediterranean, required further reductions in fishing capacity by 2013, and limited the level of joint fishing operations.

At the 2010 annual meeting, ICCAT confirmed its goal of achieving  $B_{MSY}$  with at least 60% probability by 2022, reduced the TAC again, and established a new allocation arrangement. Since that time, ICCAT has tightened various monitoring and control measures. Compliance with ICCAT rules in the eastern bluefin tuna fishery has improved substantially over the last five years and total catches in this fishery have remained at or below the TAC. In 2014, a stock assessment update showed an increase in the spawning stock biomass, but both the speed and magnitude of the upward trend remain highly uncertain. The SCRS advised the Commission to consider a “modest and gradual increase,” perhaps over 2 or 3 years, to the “most precautionary MSY estimate”. [Recommendation 14-04](#) set the TAC at 16,142 mt for 2015, 19,296 mt for 2016 and 23,155 mt for 2017. The next stock assessment is scheduled for 2016, in conjunction with an assessment of the western Atlantic stock.

*Research:* Recognizing the usefulness of biological samples in the understanding of bluefin tuna movement patterns and resolving issues associated with stock origin, spawning site fidelity, and mixing, ICCAT adopted a [Resolution 08-06](#), which encourages parties to consider making a portion of bluefin tuna quota available, consistent with domestic obligations, conservation considerations, and a bona fide research plan, to collect otoliths for microconstituent analyses and samples for genetic studies. [Recommendation 11-06](#) established a research quota of 20 mt to be utilized in support of ICCAT’s multi-year Atlantic-Wide Bluefin Tuna Research Program of research on bluefin tuna stock structure, abundance, and other important scientific questions. The Atlantic-Wide Bluefin Tuna Research Program has suffered from funding shortfalls in recent years, and ICCAT has considered alternative mechanisms for funding the program although none have been agreed to date.

*Northern Albacore:* At its 1998 meeting, ICCAT adopted a measure to limit fishing capacity in the northern albacore fishery. This action was intended to prevent further increases in fishing mortality given scientific advice at the time, which considered that the stock was close to full exploitation. A TAC and other management measures were first adopted for the stock in 2000. Based on the 2009 stock assessment that indicated the stock was overfished with overfishing occurring, the Commission adopted a rebuilding program that included a 28,000 mt TAC aimed at recovering the stock by 2020. In 2013, the Commission agreed to maintain the 28,000 mt TAC for 2014 through 2016 [[Rec 13-05](#)]. The U.S. quota of 527 mt was retained, and Cooperating non-Contracting Parties, Entities or Fishing Entities (hereafter referred to as CPCs) may continue to carryover 25% of their initial quota (to be used within two years from the year of catch). In addition, SCRS is to continue to develop a limit reference point and harvest control rules for this stock with input from the Commission to inform and guide future management decisions.

### **Panel 3 - South Atlantic Bluefin Tuna and Albacore:**

*Southern Bluefin Tuna:* No management measures have been established by ICCAT for southern bluefin tuna. This stock is distributed among the Indian, Pacific, and Atlantic Oceans. Stocks are assessed and managed by the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tunas (CCSBT). Given the overlap of distribution of this species between the Convention areas of both ICCAT and CCSBT, ICCAT will, as appropriate, collaborate in scientific work of CCSBT regarding this species and monitor its management.

*Southern Albacore:* ICCAT adopted management measures for southern albacore for the first time in 1994. Southern albacore was managed under a multi-year management measure from 2005-11 that included a TAC but no country specific quota allocations for the major (i.e., active) fishing parties (e.g., Chinese Taipei, South Africa, Namibia, Brazil and Uruguay). Instead, near-real time reporting requirements were instituted for the active fishing parties so the fishery could be closed if the TAC was reached. The TAC for 2012 was reduced to 24,000 mt, in line with scientific advice, and, for the first time, a sharing arrangement was established for the major harvesters. Scientific advice following the 2013 stock assessment called for lowering the TAC. ICCAT, however, maintained the TAC for 2014-2016—in part to accommodate growth in the fishery by some participants, such as Japan. [Recommendation 13-06](#) ended the previous sharing arrangement, which had provided aspirational individual catch limits to the developing coastal states actively fishing for southern albacore that in total exceeded previous TAC levels, and instead established hard quota limits.

#### **Panel 4 - Swordfish, Billfish, Sharks, and Other Species:**

*North Atlantic Swordfish:* Concern about the status of North Atlantic swordfish led ICCAT to begin management of this stock in the early 1990s, including catch limits and a minimum size. An international rebuilding program adopted by ICCAT in 1999 was designed to rebuild North Atlantic swordfish to the biomass that would produce MSY within 10 years, with a greater than 50 percent probability. Among other things, the North Atlantic swordfish rebuilding program included a TAC and country specific quota allocations. A U.S. closed area in the Florida Straits offered protection to juvenile swordfish. Only seven years into the 10-year rebuilding program, the stock was almost completely rebuilt.

ICCAT adopted adjustments to its rebuilding program in the late 2000s, including a small increase in the TAC and greater access to the resource for some ICCAT members—largely due to U.S. flexibility. A stock assessment in 2009 concluded that the stock was fully rebuilt but scientific advice called for a modest reduction in the TAC. In 2010, ICCAT provided several developing states with an allocation from the TAC (rather than fishery access based on allocations from available underharvest) and established a requirement that all parties submit annual fishery management/development plans. These plans include information on the history of their fishery, monitoring and control measures, and how they take into account ecosystem considerations. The annual 13,700 mt TAC was extended through 2012-13, and subsequently [Recommendation 13-02](#) extended the TAC again for 2014-16, while continuing to preserve the U.S. share.

*South Atlantic Swordfish:* ICCAT established management measures for South Atlantic swordfish for the first time in 1994. Initial measures limited countries to catch levels consistent with certain reference years. The recommendation adopted in 2006 set the TAC at the scientifically recommended level, but the sum of individual allocations was higher than the annual TAC. To help ensure that the TAC would not be exceeded, a provision required the Commission to adjust catch limits as necessary and appropriate so the overall catch for the period (2007-09) would not be exceeded. As some parties were not catching their full quotas, this provision was not needed. The South Atlantic swordfish TAC was reduced for 2010-13. This measure was extended, most recently for 2014-2016 [[Rec 13-03](#)].

*Mediterranean Swordfish:* Following a stock assessment in 2003, ICCAT adopted [Recommendation 03-04](#) requiring CPCs to take the necessary measures to reduce the mortality of juvenile swordfish in the Mediterranean. [Recommendation 03-04](#) also prohibited the use of driftnets in fisheries for large pelagics in the Mediterranean. In 2007, a time/area closure was established, and in 2009, ICCAT adopted additional reporting and monitoring requirements, including a fishing vessel register for the Mediterranean swordfish fleet. [Recommendation 13-04](#), currently in force, includes one additional month of the time/area closure, a minimum size and gear limitations, although the measure still falls short of the scientific advice. The latest stock assessment in 2014 again showed that



the stock is below the level that can support MSY and that current fishing mortality exceeds  $F_{msy}$ ; however, ICCAT did not adopt any new management measures for Mediterranean swordfish.

#### *Billfishes:*

*Blue and White Marlin:* In 1997, ICCAT adopted its first mandatory conservation measures for Atlantic blue and white marlin. A two-phase plan to rebuild depleted populations of Atlantic blue and white marlin was adopted in 2000, and has been amended several times over the years. In 2011, additional reductions in allowable catch were adopted for both blue and white marlin taken by longline and purse seine vessels. Spearfish were explicitly included as part of the white marlin species complex per SCRS advice, and the SCRS was tasked with evaluating possible time/area closures. The SCRS and the Secretariat were also directed to review existing data and information collection programs for artisanal billfish fisheries, including those of other regional and sub-regional fisheries management organizations, and to develop a plan to improve data collection in these fisheries. In 2012, ICCAT established an overall landings limit for each stock with country-specific quotas, which are designed to result in mortality reductions consistent with scientific advice. [Recommendation 12-04](#) also set Atlantic-wide recreational minimum sizes for blue and white marlin, and banned the sale of recreationally-caught marlin.

*Sailfish:* In 2009, SCRS conducted a sailfish assessment and expressed concern over incomplete reporting of catches. SCRS recommended that catches of the eastern stock be reduced and that catches of the western Atlantic stock not be increased. ICCAT considered conservation and management measures for sailfish in 2009, 2010, and 2012, but no consensus could be reached. SCRS plans to conduct the next stock assessment for sailfish in 2016.

*Sharks:* At the 2004 ICCAT meeting, U.S. leadership resulted in adoption of a binding management measure for sharks caught in association with fisheries managed by ICCAT. The decision was taken by consensus and was the first time ICCAT ever asserted management authority over sharks. To address the issue of shark finning, a major component of the measure was to require full utilization of shark catches. Fishermen must retain all parts of the shark except the head, guts, and skins to the point of first landing. Countries were required to ensure that their vessels retain onboard fins that total no more than 5% by weight of sharks onboard up to the first point of landing. [Recommendation 04-10](#) also (1) established requirements for data collection on catches of sharks, (2) called for research on shark nursery areas, and (3) encouraged the release of live sharks, especially juveniles. To increase the effectiveness of the 2004 measure, Belize, Brazil and the United States introduced a joint proposal in 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 to require sharks to be landed with their fins naturally attached in ICCAT fisheries. Consensus on this measure could not be reached, but growing support for this approach was reflected in an increased number of co-sponsors in 2013 and 2014. The proposal is expected to be considered again in 2015.

ICCAT has adopted prohibitions in recent years for several shark species that are caught in association with ICCAT fisheries, including bigeye thresher [[Rec. 09-07](#)], oceanic whitetip [[Rec. 10-07](#)], hammerheads [[Rec. 10-08](#)], and silky shark [[Rec. 11-08](#)]. To facilitate species identification, the SCRS completed a shark identification guide in 2011. A recommendation adopted in 2012 requires reporting on implementation of and compliance with existing shark conservation and management measures to assist the Compliance Committee in its review. In 2014, the United States and others proposed to limit overall catches of shortfin mako sharks in the North and South Atlantic, based on scientific advice. Consensus on the establishment of an annual catch limit could not be reached; the resulting recommendation requires CPCs to provide additional information to ICCAT about how they monitor and manage shortfin mako sharks [[Rec. 14-06](#)]. In 2015, the SCRS will conduct a stock assessment for blue shark.

#### **Bycatch and Discards:**

*Sea Turtles:* In 2010, ICCAT adopted a recommendation that requires the following: (1) purse seine vessels avoid encircling sea turtles to the extent practicable and release turtles that are encircled or entangled, including on FADs; (2) that pelagic longline vessels carry on board safe handling, disentangling and release equipment capable of releasing sea turtles in a manner that maximizes the probability of survival; and (3) that fishermen on pelagic longline vessels use the equipment and be trained in its proper use. [Recommendation 13-11](#) provides additional specificity in safe handling practices required for incidentally caught sea turtles (e.g., concerning best practices for the use of line cutters and de-hooking devices). For several years, the SCRS Subcommittee on Ecosystems has been engaged in efforts to develop an ecological risk assessment (ERA) for sea turtles. In 2014, productivity information for sea turtles was provided by several CPCs and detailed nesting data was provided by the Inter-American

Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles. After reviewing the available information, the Subcommittee decided that there was insufficient information to proceed with the ERA. Instead, the Subcommittee developed a plan to continue to assess the impact of ICCAT fisheries on sea turtles.

*Seabirds:* In 2007, ICCAT adopted a recommendation requiring line weighting or use of tori lines on vessels fishing south of 20° S, for purposes of seabird bycatch mitigation. [Recommendation 11-09](#), applicable in waters south of 25°S, requires use of at least two mitigation measures (night setting, bird scaring lines, or line weighting). The SCRS plans to review the effectiveness of seabird mitigation measures in 2015.

*Sargasso Sea:* ICCAT [Resolution 12-12](#), jointly proposed by the EU, South Africa, UK (Overseas Territories), and the United States, calls on the SCRS to consider the importance of the Sargasso Sea to tuna and tuna-like species and ecologically associated species, and present its findings to the Commission in 2015.

*Other:* In 2011, ICCAT adopted a measure intended to harmonize requirements for parties to collect data on bycatch and discards and report this information to ICCAT, including a provision to allow developing coastal States with artisanal fisheries to develop alternative methods for such data collection [[Rec. 11-10](#)].

### **Permanent Working Group (PWG):**

The PWG focuses on reviewing the implementation of technical measures, particularly monitoring, control, and surveillance measures, with a view to improving their effectiveness through revision or other means and, where needed, developing new recommendations. Together these measures provide a suite of tools to help deter illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

*Bluefin Tuna Trade/Catch Tracking:* In 1992, ICCAT adopted the Bluefin Tuna Statistical Document (BSD) program, which required the use of an ICCAT-accepted reporting system to monitor trade in fresh and frozen bluefin tuna. In 2007, ICCAT moved to a catch documentation scheme for bluefin tuna, which allows tracking of bluefin tuna product from the point of capture through to its final market. This was a major change designed to improve the monitoring of harvests and data reporting for the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna fishery. The United States fully implements the Bluefin Catch Document (BCD) program but, along with other countries that have programs whereby each individual fish is tagged and equivalent data are collected, is exempt from some of its provisions—in particular, government validation requirements. Revisions to the BCD program have been agreed numerous times over the years to clarify ambiguities, improve its functionality, and ease implementation for certain ICCAT members. Particular efforts have been made to assist parties in identifying the source and destination of bluefin tuna, especially those that farm or import live tuna, including prohibiting the co-mingling of catches made by vessels of different flags and to allow caged product to be covered by a grouped BCD in certain instances.

Notably, in 2011, ICCAT parties agreed on steps to implement an electronic BCD (eBCD), which is expected to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the program and further assist in the fight against IUU fishing. In 2012, a recommendation specified that the electronic BCD program would be technically operational by May 2013, but provided that paper BCDs would be accepted until the end of February 2014. Information technology issues have resulted in delays in the system development and implementation schedule. While some countries are using the eBCD system for at least some aspects of their catch and trade, paper BCDs are also accepted [[Re. 13-17](#)]. At its 2015 meeting, ICCAT is expected to consider once again a mandatory implementation date for the eBCD system.

*Swordfish and Bigeye Tuna Trade Tracking.* ICCAT adopted statistical document programs for swordfish (fresh and frozen) and bigeye tuna (frozen only) in 2001. A primary purpose of the programs has been to improve the reliability of statistical information on catches of these species, particularly in regards to non-Contracting Parties, since some of these nations do not provide catch data to ICCAT. ICCAT's statistical document programs track trade and provide information on the flag state and name of the harvesting vessel, the location of harvest, the point of export, a description of the fish in the shipment, etc.

*Vessel Lists.* ICCAT first adopted a recommendation to establish a record of authorized vessels in 2002, which was later amended to reduce the minimum size of vessels on the record from those over 24 meters to those 20 meters and above, to include new data reporting requirements and to clarify deadlines for the submission of information.



[Recommendation 13-13](#) established amendments to ICCAT's authorized list of large scale vessels to require eligible vessels to obtain an International Maritime Organization-Lloyd's Register (IMO/LR) numbers as a condition of listing and a prerequisite to being able to fish for ICCAT species, and [Recommendation 14-10](#) harmonized the requirements in ICCAT's authorized vessel lists.

Also in 2002, ICCAT adopted a recommendation to establish a list of vessels presumed to have engaged in IUU fishing activities. The measure requires ICCAT members and cooperating parties to take all necessary measures to not support fishing activities by vessels on the list, including prohibiting imports, landings or transshipments of ICCAT species. Since its adoption, the IUU vessel list measure has been amended to include provisions for the intersessional removal of vessels, expand the list to ICCAT member vessels, provide for the incorporation of IUU lists of other tuna RFMOs into the ICCAT list, and to reduce the minimum length of vessels that can be listed to 12 meters. The process for cross-listing IUU vessels from other RFMOs was clarified in [Recommendation 14-11](#). The current authorized and IUU vessels lists can be viewed on the ICCAT website.

*Monitoring and Control:* ICCAT's Contracting Parties have an obligation to immediately report sightings of vessels from non-contracting parties, entities or fishing entities that are fishing in contravention of ICCAT rules [[Rec. 97-11](#)]. [Recommendation 98-11](#) requires the inspection of such vessels in port, and prohibits landings and transshipment if such vessels have onboard species subject to ICCAT conservation measures; unless the vessel establishes that they were harvested in accordance with ICCAT rules, or outside of the Convention area. A recommendation on chartering arrangements was first established in 2002, to ensure the registration of chartered vessels and consistency with applicable ICCAT measures in these fishing arrangements. Observer requirements have been strengthened for fishing vessels chartered by the Contracting Parties [[Rec. 13-14](#)].

Many of ICCAT's monitoring and control measures were developed through the Working Group on Integrated Monitoring Measures, including flag state duties [[Rec. 03-12](#)], data recording systems for fishing vessels authorized to fish for species managed by ICCAT [[Rec. 03-13](#)], and vessel monitoring systems (since revised to require a more frequent reporting of vessel positions [see [Rec. 14-09](#)]). In 2005, a centralized at sea transshipment observer program was established; this measure has since been revised through [Recommendation 12-06](#). In 2010, ICCAT adopted a U.S. proposal establishing minimum standards for national observer programs, designed to ensure that important scientific information is collected in ICCAT fisheries [[Rec. 10-10](#)]. Parties must ensure at least 5% coverage on their purse seine, pelagic longline, and baitboat fleets using an effort measurement rather than by number of vessels.

In order to increase the transparency of access agreements, ICCAT requires the reporting of these arrangements (most recently updated through [Recommendation 14-07](#)). ICCAT has also established new minimum standards for inspections in port to be more consistent with the 2009 FAO Port State Measures Agreement [[Rec. 12-07](#)], as well as model forms for use in port inspections.

### **Compliance Committee:**

The Compliance Committee evaluates compliance and cooperation with ICCAT measures by members and non-members through an annual review of compliance with ICCAT statistical data requirements and management measures. This process includes a review of any alleged infractions submitted by third party sources. There is an opportunity for each Contracting Party to ask questions, provide information and clarification of the record, and submit missing information or reports. The Secretariat compiles a compliance summary table to facilitate a substantive discussion of compliance failures and corrective actions. Since 2011, an *ad hoc* review group has assisted the Compliance Committee Chair in assessing relevant information. In 2012, ICCAT adopted revised guidelines for Annual Reports, designed to standardize and improve reporting by parties on how they have implemented ICCAT requirements and to further facilitate the compliance review process. A "Schedule of Actions" has been used on a pilot basis to guide the Compliance Committee's decisions on appropriate steps in cases of non-compliance.

The Compliance Committee implements a number of ICCAT recommendations, including requirements for quota overharvests to be repaid in full within a specified timeframe and for additional quota or other penalties to be assessed for repeated quota overharvests. Under [Recommendation 06-13](#) on Trade Measures, if a CPC or non-member is found to be diminishing the effectiveness of ICCAT, that CPC or non-member is "identified" and ICCAT

sends a letter notifying them of the identification, including the reasons for it, and asking them to rectify the situation. An identified party has the opportunity to respond to ICCAT at least 30 days prior the next annual meeting to explain its non-compliance and any actions taken in response. Failure to rectify the identified activity may result in penalties including, for example, quota reduction or, as a last resort, non-discriminatory trade restrictive measures. To date, ICCAT has applied trade action under this instrument to several non-members and one ICCAT member. In cases of lesser infractions, or, in some cases, infractions that have just come to light (and where complete information may not yet be available), ICCAT may issue a letter of concern. Although letters of concern are not part of the formal process established in Rec. 06-13, they serve an important role in ICCAT's compliance process.

Under the leadership of the U.S. Chair, ICCAT's Compliance Committee reviewed extensive documentation of compliance with dozens of management measures and reporting requirements in 2014, for each of ICCAT's (then) 49 parties and five parties with cooperating status. The Committee concluded that 22 Contracting Parties and three cooperating non-Contracting Parties would receive letters of concern. No CPCs were identified at the 2014 annual meeting, and CPCs previously identified demonstrated significant improvements in reporting and engagement.

*No data-no fish:* [Recommendation 11-15](#) requires parties to submit information on how they are meeting data reporting obligations and states that in cases where Task I (catch and effort) data are not reported or are not reported completely, CPCs will be prohibited from retaining the species in question until the data are sent to ICCAT. Guidelines on the application of Rec. 11-15 were appended to the 2012 meeting report. At the 2013 annual meeting, authorization to fish for all ICCAT species during 2014 was suspended for six CPCs. In 2014, the United States and EU co-sponsored a draft resolution to formalize guidelines for the implementation of Rec. 11-15, but it was not adopted. The Compliance Committee agreed that, on the basis of information received during and following the 2014 Commission meeting, the Chairman would notify any CPC that had not fulfilled its 2013 Task 1 data reporting obligations for a particular species that the CPC is prohibited from retaining such species in 2015 until the missing data, including zero catches if applicable, are reported in accordance with SCRS data reporting requirements.

*Cooperating Parties:* ICCAT continues to encourage non-members interested in ICCAT species and fisheries to become cooperating parties. Granting cooperating status helps ICCAT expand and improve its control over the fisheries under its purview. Non-members with this status agree to abide voluntarily by ICCAT's rules and in return receive certain benefits, such as qualifying for quota allocations and placing their vessels on the authorized vessel list [\[see Rec. 03-20\]](#). In 2008, ICCAT expanded the ability of cooperating parties to participate in the work of the Commission, particularly with regard to enhanced speaking opportunities and more advantageous seating arrangements. In 2011, it was further agreed that cooperating non-members of ICCAT would be able to play a more active part in the work of the Commission, in particular through presenting or co-sponsoring proposals. Currently, ICCAT has four cooperating non-members: Bolivia, Chinese Taipei, Guyana and Suriname. El Salvador, a former cooperator, joined ICCAT in December 2014.

### **Performance Review:**

ICCAT agreed to an independent performance review of the organization in 2008, using the criteria endorsed through the United Nations General Assembly. Recommendations of the [ICCAT Independent Performance Review](#) Committee highlighted the following issues: modernization of the Convention, adoption of a penalty regime, strengthened ties between science and management, and the provision of more complete and accurate data. Notwithstanding, the reviewers concluded that ICCAT has developed reasonably sound conservation and fisheries management practices, that the SCRS Panel structure is sound and that the Commission's subsidiary bodies provide timely advice to ICCAT. The performance of the Secretariat was also considered sound and well regarded as both efficient and effective by CPCs. The Independent Performance Review Committee also concluded that the SCRS carried out good work, but recognized the difficulties they faced in relation to data availability and quality.

In 2014, ICCAT established an *ad hoc* Working Group to prepare proposed terms of reference for a second independent performance review, with these terms of reference to be agreed at the 2015 annual meeting [\[Rec. 14-12\]](#). This Working Group will also explore the possibilities for comparing ICCAT's performance with the performance of other tuna-RFMOs and make recommendations on how such a comparative performance review could be accomplished.

### **Convention Amendment:**

In 2012, ICCAT agreed to launch a process to develop targeted amendments to its Convention and established the terms of reference for a Convention Amendment Working Group (CWG) [Rec. 12-10]. The terms of reference outline a three-year process to develop Convention amendments, which will then be considered by the Commission. The Commission is to develop proposed Convention amendments on the following issues, as set out in Annex 1 of the terms of reference: Convention scope, in particular shark conservation and management; decision-making processes and procedures (entry into force provisions, voting rules/quorum, objection procedures, and dispute resolution); and non-party participation. The CWG is also tasked with producing “draft recommendations or amendments to the Convention, if the draft recommendations cannot address the issue, with respect to the items identified in Annex 2,” which include the precautionary approach, ecosystem considerations, capacity building and assistance, allocation of fishing possibilities, and transparency. The CWG, which is chaired by Ms. Deirdre Warner-Kramer of the United States, has developed draft Convention text on many of the issues identified by the terms of reference, and is scheduled to complete its work in 2015.

### **Enhancing Support for Scientific Work and Processes:**

Several recent measures are designed to strengthen ICCAT’s scientific work and processes, including the link between scientific advice and management. These include:

- *Decision Making Principles:* This recommendation provides guidance on conservation and management actions to be taken based on the status of the stock as reflected in the Kobe plot [Rec. 11-13].
- *Best Available Science:* ICCAT adopted a resolution aimed at enhancing ICCAT’s scientific process, including greater incorporation of peer review [Rec. 11-17].
- *Standardization of SCRS scientific information:* ICCAT adopted a resolution that, among other things, directs the SCRS to include the Kobe matrices in its annual report for all species [Rec. 11-14]. A subsequent resolution further clarifies issues associated with standardizing the presentation of scientific information in the SCRS annual report [Rec. 13-15].
- *Standing Working Group of Fisheries Scientists and Managers:* This Working Group was established to enhance communication and foster mutual understanding between fisheries managers and scientists in particular on management strategies, including data collection, research needs and priorities, and establishment of limit and target reference points, as well as to promote the efficient use of scientific resources and information [Rec. 14-13].

A [Science Strategic Plan for 2015-2020](#) was adopted in 2014.

### **Other Issues:**

*Data Confidentiality:* In 2010 ICCAT adopted the SCRS proposed guidelines on data confidentiality. Adoption of these guidelines was particularly important to improve access to cannery and other data by the SCRS. The guidelines specify that parties will provide data to the extent consistent with their national confidentiality requirements, and it was noted that they may need to be revised once ICCAT has gained some experience in their application.

*Elections:* In 2013, ICCAT elected a new slate of Commission officers. Stefaan Depypere (EU) was elected as Commission Chair; Raul Delgado (Panama) was elected First Vice-Chair; and Andrey Krainiy (Russia) was elected Second Vice-Chair. Taoufik El Ktiri (Morocco) chairs PWG; Derek Campbell (USA) chairs the Compliance Committee; and Sylvie LaPointe (Canada) chairs STACFAD. Regarding the Panels, Cote d’Ivoire chairs Panel 1, Japan chairs Panel 2, South Africa chairs Panel 3, and Brazil chairs Panel 4. The next elections will be in 2015. In addition, Martin Tsamenyi (Ghana) was elected in 2013 as Chair of the new Working Group to promote a dialogue between Fisheries Scientists and Managers.

### **2015 Annual and Intersessional Meetings:**

The 24<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting of the Commission will be held November 10-17, 2015, in Malta. The Commission also agreed to hold numerous intersessional meetings during 2015. An intersessional meeting of the eBCD Technical

Working Group was held at the Secretariat offices in January 2015, to be followed by additional meetings of the eBCD Technical Working Group as needed. An intersessional meeting of the Panel 2, primarily for the review of eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna fishing plans, and the 10th Meeting of the Working Group on Integrated Monitoring Measures were held back-to-back during February 2015. The Ad Hoc Working Group on FADs will meet in conjunction with the bigeye data preparatory meeting in May 2015. The United States will host the 3rd Meeting of the Working Group on Convention Amendment in Coral Gables, Florida, May 18-22, 2015. The 2nd Meeting of the Standing Working Group to Enhance Dialogue between Fisheries Scientists and Managers and 3rd Meeting of the Working Group of Fisheries Managers and Scientists in Support of the Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Stock Assessment will be held consecutively in Bilbao, Spain, June 22-26, 2015. In addition, two virtual working groups will work intersessionally: The Ad Hoc Working Group for Preparing the Next Performance Review and the Working Group on Communications Policy.

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